



POEMS AND SHORT STORIES

TOMORROW, TOUCH SKY

walter mackey



tomorrow, touch sky is a collection of poems and short stories written from 2024 to 2025. these works have found themselves in the form of the chapbook you hold in your hands with help from the chapbook factory.

"ideas are like rabbits. you get a couple and learn how to handle them, and pretty soon you have a dozen" - john steinbeck

"a great many people now reading and writing would be better employed keeping rabbits" - edith sitwell



CONTENTS

taken from me
time out of mind
mustard
target practice
es(sense) memory
lovingkindness
all rope has to fray
taciturn
angle of reflection
the hand that pulled your hair
gallery opening
massachusetts
cracked spines
peace offering
ingest, in jest
take your lilies
okay, stupid



taken from me
after the plates shifted
the dust never really settled
fractals of a corporeal me strewn across the bog
somewhere; my glasses, ribs, a mirror—
the best is surely yet to come
do i search for a home within a home?



time out of mind
i've held onto fleeting glimpses
of polaroids yet to develop in my mind
like a month of sundays
you return to me in parts
with no direction for assembly
the heart tears away at us



mustard
sarah bought an egg salad sandwich from the bodega. the egg salad sandwich had lettuce on it. the lettuce was crispy. she sat on a park bench outside the bodega and opened the sandwich in her lap. a homeless man muttered something about rats near the bench. sarah moved her backpack into her lap and set up a makeshift table for her egg salad sandwich. sarah ate mindfully; great globs of mustard fell onto the wax paper on her lap.

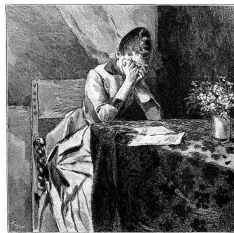
'i wonder what fran lebowitz is doing right now?'
thought sarah. fran lebowitz is probably in her
apartment not answering her phone. sarah recalled an
interview where fran lebowitz said she didn't have a
computer and she just read the newspaper. sarah
believed that fran lebowitz was probably smoking a
cigarette and scoffing at the new york times. sarah
couldn't recall, though—if it was fran lebowitz or dolly
parton who didn't have a computer. supposedly the
only way to reach dolly parton was to send her a fax
even in 2025. dolly parton still receives faxes. sarah
didn't finish the sandwich so she wrapped up what
was left and put it in her backpack. fran lebowitz's
new neighbor moved in and she listened to fix you by
coldplay on repeat. 'why the fuck is this happening?' thought fran lebowitz.



somewhere donald trump signed some papers and decided to destroy america.

target practice

at night you call into the dark
a magnetic pulse
opens up the pit within
of all purples and blues
where i climb back out
or at least some part of me does



es(sense) memory

the rotted fence post shifts
in its hole from side to side
especially when the wind blows
but we forgot to count the rings
of the tree that brought you down
now and then
i think of how your skin felt in the void



lovingkindness

i think of all you've left behind
and how i've molted—
not quite recognizable
but just the same as i ever was
even when i sit
in a circle with strangers
i am reminded
the waves never really leave us
they just get further away



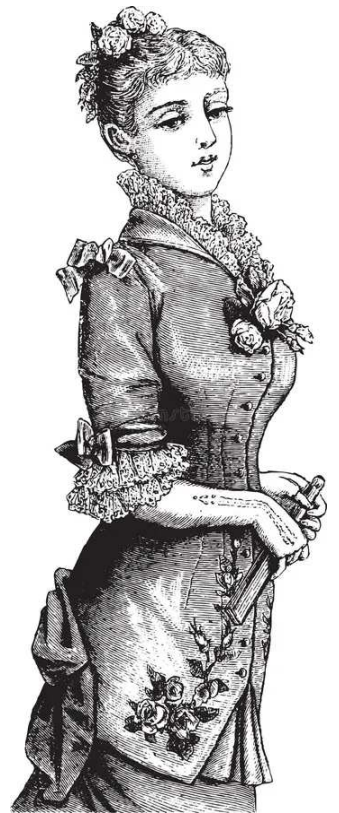
all rope has to fray

ellie slunk into the navy blue cat hair-covered
couch and let the pillows engulf her. her body
felt like she was getting a hug from a gross
uncle. her mind was racing, she lit up a
cigarette and inhaled deeply. 'fuck, calm
down,' she thought, 'just rip that bandaids off.

she knew that she had to tell ramona she
was moving to montreal without her, there
was no escaping that. she opened her laptop
on the coffee table to the bearshe window
and saw that amnesiac by radiohead finished
downloading. she went to track two - pyramid
song. she let herself get lost in the piano and
strange time signatures. she closed her eyes,
cigarette smoke painting the air in the
upstairs apartment, like miso soup.

she pictured herself dressed in all black,
wearing a cat burglar mask like a character in
one of those old black and white japanese
movies they showed on thursday nights,
down at the cinema on elizabeth avenue.
she imagined herself escaping through her
bedroom window and climbing down the
clapboard, the key for the front door in her
right hand and the mailbox key in her left,
rappelling down the side of the house like an
ice climber. if only she could disappear into
the night and fall through the looking glass
into montreal; let everyone else figure out the
rest from her livejournal entries. she could at
least be honest there.

she got up from the couch and shuffled to the
kitchen in her dusty rose slippers her nan knit
for her, with the little intarsia map of
newfoundland on the toes. she grabbed a
glass from the cupboard and turned on the
tap and it came off in her hand. 'what the
actual fuck?' she screamed. water was
spurting up from where the tap used to be, like a geyser—covering the countertop, collecting
on the floors. she looked all around the sink and screamed 'how the fuck do i stop this? i
hate this goddamn apartment!'



she thought about helping her dad install a new bathroom vanity at her uncle's cabin just outside of grand falls a few summers ago. her dad showed her how the plumbing under the sink had shut off valves. ellie flung open the cupboard doors under the sink and began twisting both of the taps, she had no idea which was the shutoff for hot or cold and this water was freezing. after a few solid turns of the valve on the right, she managed to get the water shut off. she emerged from under the sink, completely soaked. her my chemical romance shirt was plastered to her body and her denim american eagle shorts were falling down, encumbered by the weight of the water. breathing heavy and crying, ellie leaned over the sink. 'i can't wait to get out of this fucking dump,' she thought. at that moment, the front door creaked open and ramona slid in, brushing the snow off her kelly green jacket and crocheted black beanie. 'umm, girl, did you go swimming?' ellie glared at ramona. the smell of the cold wafted in.



"the tap on the sink came off, i had to turn off the main shut off valve thing, can you come help me clean this shit up?" ellie was pissed that ramona decided to turn the situation into a joke. she always did that in the past when confronted with a conflict; she'd either turn it into a joke or say something poetic, as if she belonged out on a balcony ledge in a shakespearean play somewhere.

ramona strolled out of the bathroom with a ratty looking blue towel, threads sticking out from the ends. "i can't find the mop", she said, "it's not in the closet at the end of the hall".

'it's by the side of the fridge,' ellie sighed, 'your cat peed in front of it this morning and i had to mop it up. i think it's probably time to scoop his litter.'

ramona handed the towel to ellie and she grabbed the mop. ellie focussed on sopping up the water on the countertops while wringing out the towel in the sink and ramona mopped the floor; slowly, back and forth, not taking any time to wring out the mop and more or less pushing the water around.

"ramona, do you think you can gather up the library books you loaned out from under my account? i'm going to the library tomorrow and i was thinking about getting a veggie burger from a&w afterwards".



"oh, yeah, no worries, they're just in my room. can i come too?" ramona asked, putting the mop back by the side of the fridge.

"yeah, sure," ellie coughed. "we can go together, i guess".

ramona picked up her emily the strange tote bag off the floor in the living room and retreated to her bedroom. ellie could hear her shuffling things around. she took the wet mop back out, cleaning up the mess herself.

taciturn
my partridgeberry-stained hands gripped your face
and suddenly you felt like a murder scene
but without the fear or adrenaline
just the loss or absence
of someone who isn't going to be here anymore
and when you said 'i have to go'
i realized just how grateful i was for the warning
of your goodbye
since we all long for closure
at least every once in a while

angle of reflection
i bought a mirror from a thrift store
and wondered who else might have looked inside
did they look at themselves with love?
or hatred?
did they kiss their lover in the reflection?
did they kiss themselves?



the hand that pulled your hair
you're standing in the middle of your living room. your body slinks to the ground and your hands reach for the rug. you rip it up at the edge, exposing the parquet floor underneath. you're not quite sure if you've seen the flooring in this pristine condition since you'd moved in eight years ago. you've vacuumed the rug, swept around the rug, mopped around the rug, but never actually lifted the rug. the rug rolls to one side of the room and you press your face and ear to the parquet. the termites start to whisper and you finally realize that loneliness is this emotion you've been feeling your entire life. you run to the bathroom and frantically splash your face with water, hoping a baptism will cast your demons out. you remember the avocado on the counter and how it's too ripe—needs to be thrown away, the laundry downstairs that needs folding, the television set that needs to be switched off, the cell phone that needs to be charged.

you look out the window and spot a bird sitting on a tree. the bird turns its back to you and takes a white, runny shit that drips off the branch and onto the begonias you had planted this past may. everything feels like a 1000-piece puzzle.

you think that suicide may be a viable option but then you glance at the calendar and realize tomorrow is groundhog day.

you've never seen your shadow.



gallery opening

the soapstone carving of sedna, the aboriginal goddess sat in the middle of the room behind a glass cube and i wondered why someone would create a creator, a creation a creation of a creator, and what is all of this even for? at least there's cheese on my paper plate why is there always cheese?



massachusetts

we rowed endlessly through the dark rum.

our oars cut through the water like a knife into a baked potato, a clean cut. we would make our way to sable island by dawn. there were so many things to think about. the cabin, the fire, the wildlife. but for now, we shared a tandem movement with our hearts thumping in unison above the ocean beneath us.



it wasn't always like this with the silence. as the years ebbed away at us, the words exchanged became fewer, until there almost weren't any syllables left at all. the moment you forgot to send me a birthday card felt like a harbinger of something bad to come. a dark aura cast over our relationship that blanketed every thought, every smile. in retaliation, i chose to do the same—trivial, i suppose, but what are birthdays and why are they worth celebrating anyway? we're all

here, existing, and the idea that you managed to survive another year on the planet bears no reason for celebration. but alas, we fall in line, don't we? we blow air from our lungs into balloons that eventually deflate and post photos to the internet for people to scroll by. sometimes people tap twice on their phones to tell us that they appreciate us, but how do we tell them that we appreciate them too? as the wharf came into view, i felt the boat magnetically drawn to it. you would toss the rope and hop up onto the weathered boards, tie some knots your father taught you and i'd take care of unloading the cargo. some bread, a notebook; these are our treasures, these are our jewels.



as we cut up the dirt path from the wharf to the cabin, i feel like time stands still. this is the liminal place where we move from journey to rest. this is the place where we know we're going to be warm and fed. who will light the fire? who will boil the kettle? who will put the teabags in the mugs? who will say 'i love you' first? it's so hard to tell someone you loved that they fucked up, because then you have to admit that you were hurt, which symbolizes weakness. and to be hurt you have to heal. and maybe healing is receiving a birthday card from someone you once loved.

cracked spines

if i met you you in this lifetime would i be so lucky to meet you in the next? you said you loved the smell of old books so i took you to a second-hand shop but maybe i'm meant to eat mcdonalds alone



peace offering

i haven't walked on the beach behind my house in a number of years.

my house is situated approximately fifteen metres from a bay. it is a saltwater bay, a part of the atlantic ocean.

the beach held a lot of my childhood secrets. i would spend a lot of time by myself and sometimes with my aunt who was my sitter as a child. one day, my aunt and i were walking along the beach when we found a rock, completely split in two. we both decided the rock was lucky; it had been split in two by lightning. my aunt said, 'in order to keep our good luck, we should place some money in between the rock to hide forever'. my aunt pulled a few quarters and dimes out of her pocket and placed them on the bottom half of the rock. she grabbed the remaining half and placed it on top—the coins would be sandwiched between the rocks for eternity.

sometime later, the secret of the money inside of the lucky rock began eating away at me. i had to tell someone. two weeks later, my cousins came to my house to play on the beach. i took them to the rock and showed them the money hidden inside. they were shocked because they had never seen a rock split by lightning before. there was an air of tension and i could tell they felt jealous as well—they were jealous that both my aunt and myself had bonded over this rock and shared a secret; a secret that did not remain a secret anymore.

once the secret began eating away at me, the guilt of telling the secret quickly followed. after a number of days, finally, i told my aunt that i did not keep the secret of the lucky rock and i had 'spilled the beans'. i remember my aunt getting angry with me but also feeling betrayed because i had told the secret. i will never know, but in retrospect, maybe she was holding out for luck to come into her life. a week later, we both went back to the rock. the money was gone.

from that day on, i realized that much like the money and the rock, trust is ephemeral.

ingest, in jest

there is a woman in russia
that eats sand and considers it a delicacy
i know this because i saw her
on 'ripley's believe it or not'
in 2004

—
i want you to shovel sand into my mouth
from every desert in existence
fill up my entire throat with particles of you
make me choke on your sandcastle

take your lilies

dead flowers attract flies
to eat and feast upon the petals,
the pollen;
but they say it's the thought that counts
even if they're from the grocery store
and it's february 13th
and i'm alone at home
wondering what to make for dinner



okay, stupid

nancy felt mostly let down by the men in her life. nancy recently graduated from college with a degree in women's studies and irish literature of the 18th century. she is really good at growing and caring for an herb garden and pretending she is a 13-year-old boy on omegle.com. nancy missed her last three psychiatry appointments but only because she was on a bipolar high and felt creative so she signed up for a pottery class instead. nancy's favourite author is augusten burroughs and once she thought she saw him eating a donut on west 81st street but it was really just a homeless man who reeked of alcohol and just happened to have a bald head.



the day started like any other. nancy woke up and rolled around in her bed for fifteen minutes. she opened up her macbook and typed www.tumblr.com, www.facebook.com, www.twitter.com, www.gmail.com, and www.lookbook.nu into various tabs within her browser window. nancy saw a really beautiful .gif image that someone reblogged on tumblr of rock hudson so she fantasized that he wasn't actually gay and he was holding her in his big, strong arms and he was fucking her against a shower wall on their honeymoon somewhere in the caribbean. nancy masturbated and felt alone.

nancy crawled out of bed and went to the bathroom. she stepped on the scales and immediately started frowning. '102', she thought. 'i'm 102. age is just a number. weight is just a number. i will never be 102 years old because i will kill myself next week. i can be 102 lbs forever but i will never be 102 years old'. nancy ran water for the shower and tested it with her hands. it seemed okay. she stepped inside and showered for twenty minutes. after she washed her body she stepped out of the shower and stepped on the scales again. '103', she thought. 'i am 103 lbs soaking wet. i will tell people that. 'hi, my name is nancy and i am 103 lbs soaking wet'. actually, no, i will never tell anyone my weight because i will never talk to anyone ever again. i want to only communicate through the internet via social networking sites. if someone asks me a question in real life i will just type out the answer on my cell phone and show them the message with a neutral facial expression. and if the response to their question is too long then i will just not type out a message on my cell phone at all. i will stare at them with a neutral facial expression and pretend to do 'fake sign language' and grunt a little'.

nancy towel-dried her hair and thought 'i'm 102 again' and felt calm. she walked to her computer and typed in www.okcupid.com. nancy's friend told her about this new dating site that was 'taking the internet by storm'. nancy's friend used that exact phrase. nancy imagined a tornado where all of her friends facebook profile pictures were swirling in a cyclone on her computer screen and everyone was frowning. nancy looked at the 'join' page and felt angered by the lady who was 'coaching her' on how to sign up. nancy wanted to list her status as 'depressed' but chose 'single' instead. nancy wondered if there were any websites out there for dating depressed singles and could only think of www.vampirefreaks.com and laughed a little. nancy wished she was a 'vampire freak' but felt

like it was 'physically impossible' because she had a bad experience around three years ago while giving an ex-boyfriend a blowjob in a kmart parking lot while listening to 'beautiful people' by marilyn manson.

her 'about me' section said 'i'm depressed and i want to meet other depressed people but there are no depressed singles sites out there so i am just going to use this site so please message me if you are depressed'. within four hours, nancy received a message from a boy named greg. greg said he was depressed and he was in an emo band called 'lara croft'. he said they played really angry songs and sometimes he would cry on stage just for effect. they exchanged aol instant messenger screen names and began to send messages back and forth between one another.

fleetfoxesoxoxo: hey i would really like to meet you where should we meet?? :)

bellamuerte: this seems to be moving really quickly but maybe we should meet at like the library or something i dunno

fleetfoxesoxoxo: okay i will meet you tomorrow because i feel too depressed to leave my house today

fleetfoxesoxoxo: jesus

fleetfoxesoxoxo: everything is going wrong

bellamuerte: yes i feel too depressed to leave my house as well.....

bellamuerte: i just made this veggie burger and i don't even want to eat it lol i think i am going to either throw it in the garbage can or give it to my dog...what u think i shuld do??

fleetfoxesoxoxo: i think you should give it to your dog. feed your dog. your dog is depressed —your dog is severely depressed!!!!!!

bellamuerte: he is probably severely depressed because i am severely depressed. severely depressed people usually make other people severely depressed as well lol

fleetfoxesoxoxo: okay i am going to bed because you are making me severely depressed :(

bellamuerte: see you tomorrow, hope i don't let you down or something <3 ;; kthxbai

fleetfoxesoxoxo signed off at 11:48 PM.

fleetfoxesoxoxo is offline

the next morning nancy woke up and did the same things she did yesterday morning. she rolled around in bed, loaded up her 'most visited' websites, took a shower, masturbated, weighed herself, and then went to her room to get dressed. the first thing she tried on was a flowery dress. she hated it, it made her look fat. the second thing she tried on was a pair of high-waisted stirrup pants with a dusty rose blouse. the stirrup pants made her left breast look exponentially bigger than the other. she took it off and threw the blouse on the floor. 'fuck this, fuck this, fuck that, fuck this, lihave nothing to fucking wear, fuck this'. nancy thought about all of the starving families in africa who had children that actually didn't have anything to wear. nancy said, 'i'm a fucking starving african child. i have no clothes. i have no food. i am severely depressed. i just want to sit in my hut all day and cry. i am a christian children's fund child. i am fucked. i am forever fucked'. after nancy's meltdown was over she found a purple dress in one of her drawers full of clothes that she never wears.



she pulled the purple dress out and put it on. the purple dress looked good. it had a green dinosaur on the front and the dinosaur was screaming 'i'm eating all of your crops!!!' nancy thought that this would be both 'sexy' and 'relevant' to greg, her new okcupid interest. nancy remembered a time when she took 'scene pics' of herself and uploaded them to myspace with bring me the horizon lyrics for captions. she had eight pictures with the captions 'i've', 'been', 'dragging', 'the', 'lake', 'for', 'dead', 'kids'. nancy felt severely depressed because she wasn't 'emo' anymore. nancy decided that she should 'bring emo back'.

nancy grabbed her purse and ran to get the bus. she hopped on the bus and paid \$2.25 and travelled to the library where greg said they should meet. there was a boy standing outside smoking a cigarette with long, emo bangs wearing a from first to last hoodie.

nancy walked up to him and said: 'note to self, i miss you terribly'. the emo boy said 'this is what we call a tragedy. come back to me, back to me'. nancy said 'to me. are you greg?' the emo boy said 'yes, i am greg. i really like your dress'. nancy said 'thanks, i thought you would like it'. greg said 'so what do you want to do now, sorry, i'm a smoker. ididn't tell you i was a smoker'. nancy said 'that's okay, i don't really care. smoke all you want—you're going to die. i am going to die soon. i am going to die next week'. greg said 'do you have a terminal illness?' nancy said 'no, just depression. severe depression'. greg said 'severe depression' and looked at his feet.



nancy and greg went inside the library. there were fourteen old women on computers clicking the mouses furiously. the computers were all making beeping noises and saying 'right-click now. right-click now', giving them some kind of computer tutorial so they could learn how to skype with their grandchildren who are 3200 miles away. nine of the old ladies were left-clicking. five of the old ladies were right-clicking. everyone was clicking. everyone in the entire world was clicking.

nancy and greg went to the third floor. the third floor had a bunch of books about nature. greg asked 'why do you want to go to a floor that has books about nature?' nancy said 'i just want to see every place in the world before i commit suicide. but, i won't be able to see all of those places because i don't have any money to travel. i'm fucking broke, i'm so fucking broke. i'm depressed and i'm broke. i want to travel. the only way i will ever travel is by looking at these national geographic books and bringing them home with me. sometimes i lay them on the floor and take off my shoes and socks and walk across the pages. i have to be careful not to step on the animals. most of the pages in the books are water-damaged from people renting them from the library and leaving them on their bathroom floors and then pissing on them in the middle of the night when they are too drunk to realize they are missing the toilet'. greg said 'let's rent a book'. nancy said 'no, i don't want to rent a book. if you rent a book, you have to treat it like a friend. you have to bring it home, read it, maybe even talk to it. you have to bring it to a coffee shop, drink coffee with it and then you have to put it in your bag and bring it around with you everywhere. it's like the friend that you never want around but you're kind

of obligated to hang out with because you promised them you would. then, when you're done with it you even have to bring it back to its home at the library. it's like your annoying drunk friend. it's like your severely depressed drunk friend that you have to care for until you're done with them. except you don't have to tuck them in bed. you just have to watch them slide down a slot in a wall'.

greg said 'where is your favourite place to travel?'. nancy looked at all of the books. 'i think i'd like to go to africa. africa seems nice. i think of gazelles grazing. i think there are a lot of gazelles there'. 'gazelles are dying right now. lions are killing them'. 'i'm going to kill you' said nancy. 'is this date going good? is it good? am i good?' nancy said 'yes, it is going good. you're good. you're making me laugh even though i'm severely depressed. severely depressed people laugh sometimes too. sometimes they even laugh at themselves'. greg said 'do you think we should hang out again?' nancy said 'yeah, we should probably hang out. look, there's africa'.



greg followed nancy's finger to the book she was pointing at and grabbed it. nancy said 'sometimes the pictures are really graphic. like, brutal. really brutal'. greg said 'i like really brutal things. i'm brutal. i listen to grindcore sometimes. this morning i listened to grindcore in the shower and i masturbated aggressively. violently. brutally'. nancy said 'oh, i masturbated this morning too. but when i got out of the shower i just felt depressed again. we masturbated at the same time, probably. that means we've had sex. we had sex but we just weren't together. you can have sex and not be together with someone. some people have sex over skype. skype sex. people in long-distance relationships who are teaching english as a second language in south korea probably have skype sex the most. it seems really awkward. it seems like i would just be quiet, maybe. i don't want to have skype sex. i wouldn't know what to say. i don't ever speak during sex. maybe the old ladies downstairs are learning how to skype so they can have sex. maybe they don't even want to talk to their grandchildren. they probably don't even have grandchildren. we should probably just steal this book'.

greg said 'but won't the sensor alarms go off at the front entrance? we will get caught'. 'this is weird. i didn't have to make an okcupid profile to talk to you. i could have just friend requested you on myspace three years ago'. 'i know. okcupid is pretty much okstupid'. nancy said 'just rip off the cover'. greg said 'but, you won't know where you're travelling when you read it'. nancy said, 'that's the point. i don't want to travel to africa alone, anymore. i just want to go somewhere with you'. greg said 'i don't really want to go anywhere'. nancy said 'it's okay that i won't know i'm visiting africa. i've walked on every beach in the world. they're all the same'.

